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C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 001491

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NSC FOR MARCHESE

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TAGS: PREL PGOV UNSC EG LE

SUBJECT: LEBANON: EGYPTIAN INFLUENCE ON SOUTH AFRICA AND INDONESIA DOUBTFUL

REF: STATE 68989

Classified by Minister Counselor for Economic and Political Affairs, William R. Stewart, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Poloffs delivered reftel demarche to MFA Cabinet Staff Member Nazih Al Negeiry on May 21, seeking Egyptian help in pressing South Africa and Indonesia to support a UN Security Council Chapter VII-based tribunal for Lebanon. Negeiry said that Indonesia may abstain on a UNSC vote, and that Egypt had little influence over South Africa due to competition for leadership on the continent. (Note: During a recent visit to Egypt by U.S Special Envoy for Kosovo envoy, and former Ambassador to Cairo, Frank Wisner, FM Aboul Gheit noted the complex relationship between Egypt and South Africa. End note). However, Negeiry understood that PM Seniora's Political Counselor in a recent meeting in New York with South Africa's Permrep succeeded in gaining Pretoria's support for UNSC action. Nevertheless, after promising to convey the U.S. request to his Minister, Negeiry said - based on reports from New York - that China might be problematic on the Chapter VII resolution since it is concerned about the precedent that such a resolution would set. Negeiry believed Russia provided the Secretary, during her latest Moscow visit, with an assurance that it would not veto the tribunal resolution.

¶2. (C) Negeiry pointed to the Qatari role as pivotal in current regional discussions on Lebanon, saying that he believed a senior emissary from Doha was expected in Damascus (possibly as early as May 22) to press Syria to permit its proxies in Beirut to convoke Parliament and finalize a Lebanese tribunal, vice a Chapter VII UNSC one. Negeiry suggested that this was Egypt's preferred outcome, as well, but acknowledged a low probability of success in obtaining agreement by Damascus. Negeiry said that MFA's general perception is that the tribunal process is being rushed. He added that GOE slowness vis-a-vis the tribunal and Lebanon in general was partially the result of the temporary absence of the well-connected Egyptian ambassador in Beirut, as well as ongoing discussions between the MFA and the presidency on the best way forward.

¶3. (C) Turning to the eruption of violence in Tripoli between the LAF and a Palestinian militant group, as well as the May 21 bombing in a Christian neighborhood of Beirut, Negeiry said Syria had "many levers" to play with in Lebanon. On the possibility of a second Lebanese government appointed by President Lahoud, Negeiry said that FM Aboul Gheit had told the visiting Lebanese Justice Minister last week that Egypt would not recognize a parallel government. The only ones who would support it, he said, were Iran and Syria. Negeiry finished by noting that Terje Larsen was in town to discuss Lebanon with President Mubarak and Aboul Gheit on May ¶22. Likewise, Negeiry confirmed that EU Envoy Solana would be in Cairo on May 23-24 and would also discuss Lebanon.

